



ON TRACK

The E-Bulletin of the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers

www.marp.org

marprail@yahoo.com

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July 2015

The Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers, Inc. (MARP) is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit corporation established in 1973 to improve passenger train service, travel conditions for passengers, and to work for the preservation of historic rail stations.

Monthly meetings are held at locations around the state. Check the website for dates and venues. The public is invited to attend.

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The Michigan Passenger Editor and Webmaster, Larry Sobczak
ON TRACK Editor, Kay Chase

2015 MEETINGS

10 January – Lansing's former Grand Trunk Depot with Special Guest Speaker Bob Johnston, writer for TRAINS Magazine

February – Cancelled

14 March – Kalamazoo, 1st Methodist Church

25 April – Ypsilanti Depot Freighthouse

16 May – Durand Union Station

20 June – Crossroads Village

25 July – Amtrak Exhibit Train at Grand Rapids Amtrak Station

August – Executive Committee

19 September – Annual Meeting at Durand Union Station

October – Charlevoix

November – Former GTW Depot, Lansing

December – no meeting

Visit www.marp.org
Email marprail@yahoo.com

Lawmakers Grapple With Transportation Funding Issues

Our elected representatives in both Lansing and Washington have been keeping their noses to the proverbial grindstone in seeking solutions to the challenges of adequately funding our transportation system, whether its strengthening our passenger train and local transit systems, fixing roads, repairing bridges or providing safe places for people to walk and bike.

Before adjourning for the 4th of July holiday break, the **Senate approved** a \$1.5 billion plan to fund Michigan's transportation needs. In contrast to the plan approved earlier by the House — which has been widely panned as simply moving money around — the Senate plan generates new revenue by increasing the gasoline tax by 15-cents over the next three years. The tax on diesel fuel will rise by 19-cents over that period.

Opponents of the plan are critical of the provision to redirect \$700 million in general fund revenue to roads, saying this will force cuts in other budget areas. The plan also includes a mechanism to rollback the personal income tax in any year that general fund growth exceeds inflation.

Although local transit will see a modest increase in funding, the plan "fails to put [all of] the new revenue through the traditional funding formula that supports transit, rail, trails, harbors and the rest of Michigan's complete transportation system," according to Chris Kolb, head of the Michigan Environmental Council. This is one of the important issues that will have to be addressed as the House and the Senate work over the summer to reconcile their differences.

Meanwhile the U.S. Senate completed committee action June 25 on two

(FUNDING continues on page 3)

All Aboard Grand Rapids!

Come Tour the Amtrak Exhibit Train
FREE Family Fun
Activities for young train fans too!

Saturday, July 25, 2015 - 10 am - 4 pm
Grand Rapids Amtrak Station
440 Century Ave., SW
Information & Station Location

MARP members will gather at 9:00 AM in the 2nd floor Conference Room of **The Rapid Central Station**, 250 Grandville Ave SW, Grand Rapids MI 49503, for a brief member meeting before getting our train orders for the day's activities. To avoid parking hassles and downtown traffic consider taking **The Silver Line BRT** which began service last August.

Coast-to-Coast Passenger Rail Study Round 2 Public Meetings July 13-23

With the successful completion of the first round of five public engagement meetings, the **Michigan By Rail** team is feeling pretty good about their efforts. Participants have been enthusiastic and have brought a number of important issues to the forefront. **Media coverage** has been encouraging.

Liz Treutel, as contract manager for the project, notes that participants are moving beyond “this is where I want to go by train” to the more substantive issues of “how long will it take me to get there,” “what will the fare be,” “how often will the train run.” These issues will be important elements to be considered as the technical consultants assess the feasibility of once again linking Michigan’s major population centers — Detroit-Lansing-Grand Rapids-Holland — with passenger train service.

The second round of public engagement meetings is scheduled for July 13-23. MARP, as a member of the **Michigan By Rail** team, is hosting this series of meetings, along with the **Michigan Environmental Council** and the **Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority**. See the schedule of events at the right.

Formally titled “*Detroit – Holland Passenger Rail Ridership and Cost Estimate Study*”, the study is funded by a federal grant with public matching funds provided by 11 organizations and institutions located along the potential corridor. The study is being managed by Michigan Environmental Council through a partnership with the Ann Arbor Area Transit Authority and the Michigan Department of Transportation. The consulting firm, **Transportation and Economic Management Systems** (TEMS), will complete the technical analysis. The final report is expected by December 2015.

Along with public feedback, the study will also analyze travel patterns, demographic trends, cost estimates and existing conditions of rail infrastructure to determine what, if any, next steps should be taken to examine the possibility for new passenger train service.

For questions or to request special accommodations, please contact **Liz Treutel** at (517) 487-9539 or liz@environmentalcouncil.org

Please print and share the **MEETING FLYER** widely

MARP’s indefatigable webmaster, Larry Sobczak, is busy updating the Station Locator pages on the MARP website. You’ll enjoy the great photos by staff photographer, Steve Sobel, as well.

TAKE A LOOK HERE



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED for ROUND 2

As a member of the **Michigan By Rail** team, MARP has a major responsibility for planning and carrying out the series of 16 public engagement meetings scheduled throughout the summer.

John Langdon is looking for volunteers to assist with the each of the 6 meetings in this second round. As a volunteer, you are expected to be available for set up at 5:00 PM as well as take down at the end of the meeting. Our grant funding makes it possible to reimburse you for your mileage.

If you live in one of these 6 localities, please contact John at john.langdon@sbcglobal.net or 636-218-9009.

Volunteers are needed to:

1. Staff the registration table (1person)
2. Greet participants as they arrive (1 person)
3. Assist at the group tables (2 persons)

Monday July 13 6:00-7:30 PM	HOLLAND Holland High School Cafeteria 600 Van Raalte Ave Holland, MI 49423
Wednesday July 15 6:00-7:30 PM	HOWELL Bennett Recreation Center 925 W. Grand River Howell, MI
Monday July 20 6:00-7:30 PM	BRIGHTON The Greater Brighton Area Chamber of Commerce 218 E. Grand River Brighton, MI
Tuesday July 21 6:00-7:30 PM	YPSILANTI SPARK East Incubator 215 West Michigan Ave, Ypsilanti, MI
Wednesday July 22 6:00-7:30 PM	PLYMOUTH Plymouth City Hall 201 S. Main Plymouth, MI
Thursday July 23 6:00-7:30 PM	DEARBORN John D. Dingell Transit Center 21201 Michigan Avenue Dearborn, MI

*The final round of meetings is tentatively scheduled for
Sept. 28 - Oct. 9 in Ann Arbor, Detroit, East Lansing,
Holland and Grand Rapids.*

3rd Annual Michigan Rail Conference

KEY NOTE SPEAKER

Joseph C. Szabo

Former head Federal Railroad Association
Newly named to lead the
Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning



MICHIGAN RAIL CONFERENCE
Aug. 19-20 • Grand Rapids, MI
GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY,
EBERHARD CENTER

AUGUST 19 1:00 - 4:30PM
FIELD TRIP

\$25 until June 30

AUGUST 20 8:00AM - 7:00PM
MAIN CONFERENCE

\$75 until June 30

[CLICK HERE for Information & Registration](#)

MARK YOUR CALENDARS**MARP 42nd Annual Meeting**

Saturday, September 19, Durand Union Station

Details will be available in the August issue of ON TRACK.

2nd Annual Wisconsin Passenger Rail Summit

Saturday, July 18, Wintergreen Resort in Wisconsin Dells

Sponsored by All Aboard Wisconsin and featuring a keynote address by "futurist" William Draves, author of "End of the Auto Age". Following the meeting, enjoy a picnic at the **Riverside and Great Northern Railway** north of the Dells. Get a close look at the Standley steam locomotives built in Janesville and take a ride along the former Milwaukee Road.

Contact: David.J.Mumma@gmail.com

NARP Fall 2015 Council & Membership Meeting

Friday, October 16, 2015 - Sunday, October 18, 2015

Crowne Plaza at Union Station

123 West Louisiana St, Indianapolis IN 46255

On-Line Registration will be open by August 1, 2015
narprail.org/events/narp-fall-council-meeting/

13th Michigan Railroad History Conference

Saturday, October 17

Lansing Community College, West Campus, Lansing MI

Features a keynote presentation by Kevin P. Keefe "Motor City Limited" - Long before Amtrak, the Detroit-Chicago Route Defined Fast, Competitive Corridor Service" More information at MichiganRailroadHistory.org

TAKE A VERY FAST RIDE

The Union Pearson Express train began service June 6, speeding passengers 23.3 km from Union Station in **downtown Toronto to the airport.**

(FUNDING *continued from page 1)*

bills vital to both short and longer term funding for Amtrak.

The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development has approved a FY2016 **spending bill** that is a big improvement over House efforts to cut Amtrak funding by \$262 million. The subcommittee voted down an amendment offered by Sen. Coons to increase funding to match Amtrak's budget request of \$2 billion (up from the \$1.4 billion approved), but the amendment could be reintroduced in the full Senate. In addition, the subcommittee cut \$424 million from the Federal Transit Administration account, jeopardizing the New Starts program geared toward initiating and expanding heavy- and light-rail urban transit systems.

Longer term, the **Railroad Reform Enhancement and Efficiency Act** (RREEA) authorizes spending approximately \$1.65 billion annually over the next four years on rail service, as well as \$570 million per year on rail grants. Ken Prendergast, **All Aboard Ohio**, is particularly enthused about Sec. 301, a program for issuing three-year operating assistance grants to launch or restore intercity rail passenger transportation. This could have significance for Michigan's proposed Coast-to-Coast route.

Train and transit advocates are urged to write to their lawmakers asking them to support funding a strong 21st century national passenger train system.

Find your Senator [HERE](#)

Find your Congressperson [HERE](#)

Find your State Senator [HERE](#)

Find your State Representative [HERE](#)

YOU Know Who You Are!

If you have not yet paid your 2015 membership dues

CLICK HERE NOW

TO PAY ONLINE

~ ~ ~

New members are invited to use this convenient way to become part of a great organization!

QUESTIONS?
email us at marprail@yahoo.com

View from elsewhere . . .

"Mass rail transit is still the future We can travel at close to a hundred miles an hour while being on our phones, reading books, or just relaxing. Trains can provide Wi-Fi, food, a better environment and introduce us to people we would have never meet if we stayed in our cars. Instead of slowly allowing trains to fade away we need to . . . show people that trains are not the past but are also the transportation of the future."

—Kiefer Weisman, Ball State University student and executive producer of the film "Indiana Crossrails: A Transit Choice." View the film, a blog and a series of public service announcements promoting rail travel on the students' website IndianaCrossRails.org.

*"The May 31 Reuters **story** in the Duluth News Tribune . . . repeated errors about Amtrak and the issue of "profitability" that really should not appear ever again in public news media."*

—J. Howard Harding, a retired transportation planner and a former director of the National Association of Railroad Passengers, in an article reprinted [HERE](#) explaining why he thinks that transportation "profitability" is a myth for Amtrak, airlines or roads.



Priority Boarding for Legacy Club Members

The Legacy Club is now open in Chicago's Union Station, giving members the kinds of amenities frequent-fliers enjoy. In addition to priority boarding, passengers will relax in comfortable chairs, have access to Wi-Fi and charging stations and enjoy complimentary refreshments. Introductory memberships are available now for \$10 (\$20 after 31 July). For information, speak with a uniformed Amtrak employee at Chicago Union Station or stop by the Amtrak kiosk in the Great Hall.



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CLICK HERE

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KIDS CAN RIDE EVERY DAY FOR 50% OFF

Terms and conditions apply



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